Composers Now Celebrates Festival Opening & Announces Expanded Programming

The January 31 event kicks off the month-long festival with a diverse program and the annual Composers Now Visionary Awards - presented, this year, to composers Laura Kaminsky and T.J. Anderson

Composers Now empowers living composers, celebrates the diversity of their voices, and honors the significance of their contributions to our society. On Thursday, January 31 @ 7:00, the 10th annual Composers Now Festival opens at The National Opera Center’s Marc A. Scorca Hall in Manhattan.

Hosted by Founding Artistic Director Tania León, the evening features performances of music by Balinese musician/composer Gusti Nyoman Darta, emerging composers Yusei Hata and Yuri Lee, composer Laura Kaminsky, composer/performer Joseph Keckler, composer/pianist Major Scurlock, and percussionist/composer Samuel Torres. The fourth annual Composers Now Visionary Awards will be presented to composers Laura Kaminsky and T.J. Anderson. Given annually at the opening event of the festival, the award recognizes members of the arts community who, through their own creative practice and advocacy for others, have made a profound, positive and lasting impact in our culture.
The annual festival is the centerpiece of the ongoing advocacy work initiated by Composers Now placing the spotlight on living composers and their importance in communities. Through residency programs both at The Pocantico Center in the Hudson Valley and at the Civitella Ranieri Foundation in Italy, the Dialogues Music + Discourse series in NYC, the Composers-Interviewing-Composers events during the festival, and two new initiatives to be launched this year, Composers Now supports composers by creating opportunity and interaction with audiences.

2019 COMPOSERS NOW FESTIVAL OPENING EVENT
Thursday, January 31, 2018, 7:00PM
The National Opera Center
Marc A. Scorca Hall
330 Seventh Avenue, NYC
Tickets: $25 general admission: subsidize someone in need / $20 general admission: regular price / $15 general admission: student/artist/in need, advance purchase suggested
INFO / BUY TICKETS

VISIT WWW.COMPOSERSNOW.ORG FOR AN UP-TO-DATE SCHEDULE OF THE 2019 FESTIVAL

Dialogues, 11/30/18, co-presented with the ASCAP Foundation and Steinway & Sons, NYC
Courtney Bryan, Marcos Balter, Felipe Lara, Žibuoklė Martinaitytė
COMPOSERS NOW OPENING EVENT
January 31, 7PM

Program

Yuri Lee (b. 2004)
Blustery Day
Performed by Face the Music, a program of the Kaufman Music Center
Yuri Lee is a 2019 Luna Lab Fellow.

Yusei Hata (b. 2002)
Very Short
Performed by Face the Music

Laura Kaminsky (b. 1956)
Forage, a movement from Rising Tide
Cassatt Quartet

Laura Kaminsky
Final scene from the opera Today It Rains
Blythe Gaissert, mezzo soprano; Kristen Kemp, piano

Gusti Komin Darta (b. 1978)
Tipat Taluh for Balinese gendér wayang
Performed by Saiban, a contemporary Balinese chamber ensemble

Major Scurlock
Brief presentation and demonstration by Major Scurlock and Kendra J. Ross, dancer
Video excerpt of Black Moon (La Lune Noir) Act I
Music by Major Scurlock
Choreography by Monstah Black

Samuel Torres (b. 1976)
Percussion improvisation

Joseph Keckler
Performing original arias incorporating humor and video
2019 COMPOSERS NOW VISIONARY AWARD WINNERS

LAURA KAMINSKY
Laura Kaminsky frequently addresses issues of sustainability, war, and human rights in her work. “Full of fire as well as ice, [she writes] in an idiom that contrasts dissonance and violence with tonal beauty and meditative reflection. It is strong stuff.” (American Record Guide) With co-librettists Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed she has created the most widely-produced contemporary opera in the U.S., As One (2014), Some Light Emerges (Houston Grand Opera 2017), and the forthcoming Today It Rains (Opera Parallèle/American Opera Projects 2019). Upcoming: a Piano Quintet for Ursula Oppens and the Cassatt String Quartet; and with Reed, Postville, inspired by the unprecedented and devastating immigration raid there in 2008, for a consortium led by Santa Fe and San Francisco Operas. She is head of composition at the Conservatory of Music/SUNY Purchase.

T.J. ANDERSON, JR.
T.J. Anderson is one of the leading composers of his generation. He was born on August 17, 1928 in Coatesville, Pennsylvania. He now lives in Atlanta, Georgia, where he devotes full time to writing music. He studied composition with George Geiga, Philip Bezanson, Richard Hervig, and Darius Milhaud. Anderson is well known for his orchestration of Scott Joplin's opera, Treemonisha, which he made while composer in residence with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra from 1969 to 1972. As a lecturer, consultant, and visiting composer, he has appeared in institutions in the United States, Brazil, Germany, France, and Switzerland. He was the first composer-fellow of the National Humanities Center in 1996. In 1997 he was honored as a founder and first president of the National Black Music Caucus with a concert of his music. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, May 18, 2005.
COMPOSERS NOW

During the month of February, the festival brings together approximately 100 performances of music by living composers presented by venues, ensembles, composers, orchestras, opera companies, dance companies, and others, throughout New York City. From jazz to indie-rock, from classical to electronic and beyond - and with composers in attendance at all events - Composers Now aims to provide an all-encompassing platform for composers and audiences. In 2017, the opening event coincided with a proclamation from the Mayor's office calling the day “Composers Now Festival Day.” The organization boasts an expanding list of Presenter Partners, including The Morgan Library, Harlem Stage, Concert Artists Guild, and Face the Music.

Composers Now is a project partner of The Fund for the City of New York. Composers Now gratefully acknowledges the support of the ASCAP Foundation, the Cheswatyr Foundation, the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, the Dubose and Dorothy Heyward Memorial Fund, the Newburgh Institute for the Arts and Ideas, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

“Thank the heavens that Composers Now exists. Tania León has taken her torch out into the forest and has gathered the tribe. And we are a mighty tribe with a wealth of stories to share.”
- Jason Moran (composer/pianist, and MacArthur Grant recipient)

OPEN CALL TO ARTISTS + VENUES

All artists and presenters are invited to enroll in the festival by adding their performance via this intake form. Those who register by January 16 are eligible for the subsidized “Composers-Interviewing-Composers” event add-on.
COMPOSERS-INTERVIEWSING-COMPOSERS

Composers-Interviewing-Composers is a series of live conversations within the festival. These Composers Now-sponsored events will feature live discourse between featured composers at select performances during the festival. These conversations, hosted by the venue, will take place in proximity to the featured festival performance.

COMPOSER-CURATORS NEW INITIATIVE

Recognizing the full-range of creative thinking that composers offer, as well as the importance of innovative programming, Composers Now is launching a new initiative in spring 2019 providing further opportunity for composers to showcase their perspective. This year, composer Wang Jie curates a mini-series of performances. The opportunity provides Wang Jie with an open platform to develop performances of her conception.

FIRST COMMISSIONS NEW INITIATIVE

Beginning this year, Composers Now will commission two emerging (pre-college aged) composers and present the world premiere performances of their work. The first two commissions are privately funded by a NYC individual. Announcement of the two commissioned composers will be made later this year, and the world premiere performances will take place in the 2019-20 concert season.

TANIA LEÓN / FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Tania León, (b. Havana, Cuba) is highly regarded as a composer and conductor and recognized for her accomplishments as an educator and adviser to arts organizations. She has been profiled on ABC, CBS, CNN, PBS, Univision, Telemundo, and independent films. León’s opera Scourge of Hyacinths, based on a play by Wole Soyinka with staging and design by Robert Wilson, received over 20 performances throughout Europe and Mexico. Commissioned by Hans Werner Henze and the city of
Munich for the Fourth Munich Biennale, it took home the coveted BMW Prize. The aria “Oh Yemanja” (“Mother’s Prayer”) was recorded by Dawn Upshaw on her Nonesuch release, The World So Wide.

Commissions include works for Ursula Oppens and the Cassatt Quartet, Nestor Torres, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, New World Symphony, Koussevitzky Foundation, Fest der Kontinente (Hamburg, Germany), Cincinnati Symphony, National Endowment for the Arts, NDR Sinfonie Orchester, American Composers Orchestra, The Library of Congress, Ensemble Modern, The Los Angeles Master Chorale, The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, The Los Angeles Philharmonic, and International Contemporary Ensemble among others. Recent commissions include: the score for the opera, The Little Rock Nine, with a libretto by Thulani Davis, and historical research by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., commissioned by the University of Central Arkansas’s College of Fine Arts and Communication.

León has also received Honorary Doctorate Degrees from Colgate University, Oberlin, and SUNY Purchase College, and has served as U.S. Artistic Ambassador of American Culture in Madrid, Spain. A Professor at Brooklyn College since 1985 and at the Graduate Center of CUNY, she was named Distinguished Professor of the City University of New York in 2006. In 2010 she was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters and in 2017 she received the Mad Women Festival Award in Music, in Madrid, Spain.

Her honors include the New York Governor’s Lifetime Achievement Award, Symphony Space’s Access to the Arts, the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award, and the Fromm, Koussevitzky, and Guggenheim Fellowships. In 2012 she received both a Grammy nomination (for “Best Contemporary Classical Composition”) and a Latin Grammy nomination (for “Best Classical Contemporary Composition”) and in 2013 she was the recipient of the prestigious 2013 ASCAP Victor Herbert Award. Most recently she was awarded a 2018 United States Artists Fellowship and inducted as a 2018 member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.